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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Fifty-seventh session

Summary record (partial)* of the 1230th meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 9 July 2014, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Neubauer (Vice-Chairperson)

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* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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In the absence of the Chairperson, Ms. Neubauer (Vice-Chairperson), took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention (*continued*)

Fifth periodic report of Lithuania (continued) (CEDAW/C/LTU/5)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson the delegation of Lithuania took places at the Committee table.*

Articles 1 to 6 (continued)

2. **Mr. Žilinskas** (Lithuania), responding to the remaining questions on prostitution and human trafficking, said that preventive measures had been taken by the police in various parts of the country. Among them were meetings, lectures, discussions at educational institutions, leaflets and posters. The situation of children from at-risk families had been addressed as well. The Ministry of the Interior, in partnership with the Embassy of the United States of America in Vilnius and Microsoft Corporation, had organized an event, the Stop Human Trafficking Tech Competition, to promote innovative ways to prevent human trafficking. Funds had been allocated to implement the best ideas. In 2013, at least 300 people had received training as part of three inter-institutional projects on the prevention of human trafficking, and at least 12 more awareness-raising and educational events were planned.

3. Preventive measures were also taken by municipalities and non-governmental organizations. The Missing Persons' Families Support Centre, for instance, had provided assistance both to victims of human trafficking and to members of groups at risk of being trafficked. Capacity-building for girls and boys had been achieved by organizing events at schools with special-education programmes, and commemoration of the International Missing Children's Day helped to contribute to greater awareness of the problem of missing persons and trafficking in human beings. Those preventive measures, and others, such as an international conference on how to ensure justice in matters regarding prostitution, were closely connected to efforts to reduce demand for prostitution. It was true that, in the *Trafficking in Persons Report* of the United States Department of State, Lithuania had fallen from tier 1, the highest ranking for compliance with the United States Trafficking Victims Protection Act, to tier 2, but the State party had taken the report's recommendations into account and was working on a plan to implement them.

4. Training had been organized for judges, prosecutors and the police. Specialized judges and prosecutors focused solely on cases involving trafficking in human beings. A more policy-focused steering group oversaw implementation of the plans to combat trafficking. Its members were approved by decree of the Prime Minister. Lastly, Lithuania was aware of the European Parliament's vote in favour of a resolution to criminalize the purchase of sex. The issue was being discussed in Lithuania, and the Committee would be kept informed of the results.

Articles 7 to 9

5. **Ms. Pimentel** said that she was very pleased that Lithuania's President was a woman and hoped that she would inspire other Lithuanian women to enter public life. Nonetheless, she expressed concern about the persistence of stereotypes about girls and women, and for that reason she requested additional information on the State party's plans, mentioned in its periodic report, to strengthen traditional family values. What exactly did traditional family values refer to? Could such values be strengthened without reinforcing old stereotypes, which were the reason for women's underrepresentation in public life in

the first place? She also requested information on the measures taken to combat negative views of women in politics and to familiarize members of the parliament, especially its women's group, with the Convention. Lastly, she requested information on that group's achievements.

6. **Ms. Jahan** recalled that nationality was the basic foundation of identity and was pleased to note that the State party's Law on Citizenship was gender-neutral. She expressed concern, however, about statelessness, which had a disproportionate impact on women and children and, although the State party had acceded to the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, she understood that the Law on Citizenship, amended in 2010, did not provide for Lithuanian citizenship for children born in Lithuania to stateless parents who were not permanent residents in the country. As worded, the Law could perpetuate generational statelessness. She therefore wished to know what legislative measures the State party was considering taking to prevent statelessness. She also wished to know whether stateless women had the right to work and enjoyed access to social services, including health care, how birth registration was regulated, what measures had been taken to ensure that limited knowledge or other obstacles did not prevent members of the stateless population from obtaining birth certificates for their children and how the nationality-related issues of Roma women and children living in Lithuania had been addressed. Lastly, she requested information on the measures that had been taken to prevent sham marriages from being contracted for the purpose of acquiring Lithuanian nationality, a practice that had been identified as one strategy to force women into prostitution.

7. **Mr. Žilinskas** (Lithuania) said that the traditional values which the authorities were making efforts to reinforce drew on such family-friendly concepts as positive parenting, reconciling family and work obligations and improving the means of resolving family disputes.

8. **Mr. Vaidelis** (Lithuania) acknowledged that women accounted for more than 85 per cent of all schoolteachers. Efforts were nonetheless being made to involve more men in the educational system. Regarding textbooks and stereotypes, he said that a review had been done which had identified only a few instances of gender bias. A policy was currently being formulated to ensure that potential problems with textbooks were identified promptly. Printed textbooks were giving ground to digital material and the country would have to develop a method to ensure that that material was suitable for use in the school system.

9. **Ms. Juršėnienė** (Lithuania) said that the activities of the group of women parliamentarians had been ongoing for several years. The group assessed draft legislation and intervened when a bill was insufficiently gender-sensitive. It also monitored government activities pertaining to gender equality. Reporting under the Convention was the obligation of the Government, not of the group of women parliamentarians; however, the group could make suggestions regarding the report. The group also followed the concluding observations adopted by the Committee very closely.

10. **Mr. Žilinskas** (Lithuania) said that in accordance with the Law on Citizenship, recently amended to bring it into line with the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, a stateless person now had to live only five years in Lithuania to be eligible for Lithuanian citizenship. Regarding sham marriages, he acknowledged that the media were debating the issue widely but said that such marriages did not take place in Lithuania.

11. **Ms. Ambrozaitienė** (Lithuania) said that according to census data stateless persons accounted for less than 1 per cent of the Lithuanian population.

12. **Mr. Žilinskas** (Lithuania) added that since the introduction of the amendment to the Law on Citizenship the number of stateless persons had fallen from slightly more than 4,000 to approximately 3,800.

Articles 10 to 14

13. **Ms. Hayashi** noted that the State party had made efforts to ensure equal opportunities for women and men in higher education. One such effort was a project, funded by the European Union, in which scholarships were awarded to scientists returning to work after maternity or paternity leaves. As the project had been carried out in 2011–2012, she wished to know whether it had made any visible difference and whether there were plans to continue it. She also wished to know whether the programme covered only natural sciences or whether it covered social sciences and the humanities as well.

14. Turning to children who were not attending school, she wondered why a programme to combat truancy, which had been approved in 2008, was still being tested. Why had the technical errors that prevented full implementation of the programme not been resolved more than five years later? She also noted that the scarcity of data on the native languages or ethnicities of those studying in the educational system made it hard to determine whether minorities, in particular Roma students, were struggling. She thus wished to know what was being done to gather data disaggregated by sex and ethnicity. She also requested information on the efforts made to include Roma girls in regular schools rather than special-needs schools. In that respect, more information on the differences between regular and special-needs schools would be welcome.

15. She noted that the State party had encountered obstacles to implementing the Preparation for Family Life and Sexual Education Programme and requested information on those obstacles and the measures to be taken to overcome them. Lastly, there were no schools providing adult education in rural areas, and she wondered how the Government ensured girls' right to education in rural areas and how adult women could be guaranteed access to lifelong learning.

16. **Ms. Gbedemah**, commending the progress made by the State party in a number of areas regarding employment, said that the employment rate of women, for example, had exceeded that of men. Remarkably, more than half of all car and motorcycle mechanics in Lithuania were women. Nonetheless, gender segregation in the labour market still prevailed, with women continuing to dominate health-care, education and other industries. Since no precise data had been offered, she wished to know what particular positions women held in female-dominated occupations. Alternative sources had indicated that the fields that women were breaking into in ever-greater numbers were the very fields in which the gender wage gap was widening. The wage gap was also wider in the private sector than in the public sector. Moreover, young women seemed to be the most heavily affected by gender wage gaps. They also experienced hiring discrimination, as they were viewed as poor returns on investment, since it was assumed that they would simply go off and have children. Re-entering the job market would be hard for them. In view of those prejudices, she wished to know what specific steps the Government had taken to ensure compliance with the Committee's previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/LTU/CO/4) regarding the elimination of vertical and horizontal occupational segregation and to close the wage gap. She also requested information on the steps taken to raise women's employment rates and the specific gender issues dealt with over the past two years by the country's Tripartite Council, which brought together the Government, trade unions and employers. How had the Council's work translated into policy?

17. With respect to women's training programmes, she wished to know whether an impact assessment had been completed. If so, what effect had the training programmes had on the number of business start-ups, productivity and turnover? She also wished to know what kinds of businesses had the women who had received training started and what kind of credit was available to them.

18. Men took little of the parental leave to which they were entitled; women took it instead, as their wages were lower, thus enabling men to continue earning the higher wages. In that light, the Committee wished to know whether the Government had looked into that phenomenon. As a signatory to the International Labour Organization Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), the State party should provide greater incentives for men to take the leave allotted to them, as the Committee had recommended in its previous concluding observations.

19. The State party's report referred to problems with preschool availability and affordability. She suggested that preschool hours should be better adapted to the schedules of working women. Lastly, she wished to know what strategies were in place to ensure that the principle of equal pay for work of equal value would be included in the revision of the Labour Code, due to be undertaken shortly, and that gender-equality experts would be part of the process.

20. **Mr. Vaidelis** (Lithuania) said that higher education in Lithuania was currently undergoing a transformation. Several institutions were being reorganized. Many students were drawn to social sciences and the humanities, but at the moment a strategy was in place to promote science, technology, engineering and medicine. Many programmes in education and the social sciences had been discontinued as they failed to meet established standards. In addition, programmes implemented with the support of European Union Structural Funds had been discontinued as well, as the highly restrictive financing rules had posed a number of problems. As to adult education, he said that there were 48 adult-education centres in the country, in addition to the University of the Third Age. Regarding truancy, it was not a serious problem in Lithuania. It was possible, however, that unreliable data had led to underestimating the phenomenon.

21. The Government had established multifunctional educational centres in rural areas which catered for school-age children as well as adults. A national interministerial programme had also been established to address the specific barriers restricting Roma girls' access to education. In 2013, two separate programmes had been introduced to schools, on health, including preparation for family life and sexual education, and human safety with a view to attaining distinct safety, health and sexual education goals at various levels of education.

22. **Ms. Daugalienė** (Lithuania) said that the National Rural Development Programme had greatly improved living conditions for rural women and had increased their participation in the labour market.

23. **Ms. Juršėnienė** (Lithuania) acknowledged that sexual discrimination and negative gender stereotypes had led to sectoral and professional gender segregation and resulted in a significant gender pay gap. Furthermore, men continued to hold senior management positions, while women remained in more junior positions. The Government had launched a five-year programme aimed at promoting the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, which would include employer awareness-raising initiatives to encourage gender equality in the workplace. A change in societal norms, however, would not be quick and would require sustained, long-term efforts. A series of measures had therefore been implemented to encourage women to become entrepreneurs and small business owners, including the introduction of a microfinance scheme and skills training programme. Gender mainstreaming had also been applied to all national employment policies and the Labour Code had been amended to include specific protection measures for women, such as improved working conditions and additional maternity leave provisions. The overall number of men opting to take parental leave remained low. However, societal attitudes appeared to be shifting and younger men were more willing to reconcile their professional and family responsibilities.

24. **Mr. Vaidelis** (Lithuania) said that the Government had taken steps to address the shortage of preschool places and had provided an additional 11,000 places in recent years.

25. **Ms. Nwankwo** asked whether steps had been taken to revise all educational textbooks and materials in order to eliminate negative gender stereotypes as well as to improve women and girls' access to affordable and modern contraceptive methods. She also wished to know whether the State party had considered requesting external technical assistance and additional human and financial resources to effectively promote sexual and reproductive health standards.

26. She requested further information on the content and status of the bill on the protection of life in the prenatal phase and asked to what extent it would affect women's reproductive rights, in particular with regard to the regulations and time limits pertaining to legal abortion and provisions pertaining to access to sexual and reproductive rights. She also wished to know whether the Government intended to campaign against the adoption of the bill and planned on limiting the influence of religious groups on political decisions concerning sexual and reproductive health rights. Given the high rates of infertility affecting families in the State party, she also enquired as to the status of the bill on assisted reproductive procedures.

27. Lastly, she requested further information on access by women with disabilities to reproductive health services and legal safeguards to prevent forced abortion and sterilization. What steps had been taken to investigate claims of forced abortion and sterilization of women with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities?

28. **Ms. Barciro-Bobadilla** asked whether there were policies and programmes aimed at the economic empowerment of rural women which ensured their access to productive resources and capital as well as to health services and to social and cultural opportunities. She also asked the delegation to describe the results achieved to date of the 2010–2014 national programme on equal opportunities for women and men, including detailed information on the material and human resources allocated to its action plan, and whether the time-bound targets established had been used to assess the progress of implementation in all regions of the State party, including rural areas. Had additional measures been taken to increase women's participation in public and political life, particularly vulnerable groups of women, such as Roma women, women with disabilities and women in rural areas?

29. **Ms. Armonavičienė** (Lithuania) said that the Government opposed the bill on the protection of life in the prenatal phase and was campaigning against its adoption. Woman had access to a wide range of modern contraceptive methods, including hormonal contraception, for which gynaecologists provided an initial check-up and family doctors provided follow-up care. The bill on assisted reproductive procedures had faced significant opposition in the parliament but steps had recently been taken to accelerate its adoption. Adolescent-friendly sexual and reproductive health services had been introduced in order to provide information and advice on a range of subjects, including sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. Efforts were under way to strengthen and extend such services and a sexual and reproductive health bill had been prepared in partnership with women's organization and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to further enhance the information provided to adolescents.

30. **Mr. Vaidelis** (Lithuania) said that school teachers were responsible for selecting the most appropriate textbooks for their students. The Government had revised all educational textbooks and materials in order to eliminate negative gender stereotypes and had launched training courses to assist teachers in their textbook selection. Religious education lessons formed part of the national curriculum but religious groups did not exert undue influence on political decisions involving sexual and reproductive health rights.

31. **Ms. Daugalienė** (Lithuania) said that national legislation provided for a number of specific protection measures for vulnerable women. Cases of sexual violence against women with disabilities in care homes were thoroughly investigated by the relevant authorities and a court order was required before any abortion or sterilization procedure was performed on persons lacking in legal capacity.

32. **Ms. Michailovskytė** (Lithuania) said that rural women's participation in public and political life had increased and rural women's organizations had become very influential at the local level. Rural women's action groups implemented local development strategies and received funding from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. Rural women also had access to education and training as well as rural livelihood development schemes and their overall standard of living had increased dramatically. In some cases, rural women had become more politically and economically active than men.

33. **Mr. Klimavičius** (Lithuania) said that the Government not only provided financial support for rural women to work in their local communities but also to seek work in urban areas.

34. **Ms. Juršėnienė** (Lithuania) said that, in the follow-up to the previous concluding observations, a wide-ranging study had been conducted on women's access to employment, education, health care, housing and social and cultural life. The findings would be published online in September 2014 at the latest and would serve as a basis for policymaking and potential legislative amendments. Although no data were available on the participation of women with disabilities in decision-making, efforts were being made to involve all women, for example through women politicians' clubs. A programme had been set up to foster the training and economic empowerment of Roma women and additional measures were foreseen under the Programme for Roma Integration. The 2012–2014 Inter-Institutional Action Plan on the Promotion of Non-Discrimination would not be evaluated until 2015.

Articles 15 and 16

35. **Ms. Hayashi** asked what the rationale was behind authorizing girls under 16 to marry if they were pregnant, according to what criteria did the courts deny or approve requests for early marriage and whether the Government intended to amend the Civil Code to ban all marriages under age 18. Referring to the previous concluding observations and the Committee's general recommendation No. 29, she wished to know whether the State party had conducted a survey on the economic consequences of divorce on women and, if so, what the findings had been. She requested confirmation that the Constitutional Court had found the Conceptual Framework for National Family Policy unconstitutional because its definition of the family was too restrictive. She asked whether the bill on partnership covered all non-traditional family models.

36. **Ms. Michailovskytė** (Lithuania) said that the provision authorizing pregnant girls to marry early was necessary because marriage was the only way a girl could obtain legal capacity and custody of her child; there were currently no plans to amend the provision. Regarding the division of marital assets, she said that the courts were free to assign a larger share to either spouse based on their specific circumstances. The bill on partnership had been very recently submitted to the parliament for consideration.

37. **Mr. Milevičius** (Lithuania) said that the Conceptual Framework for National Family Policy was not being implemented, but that the Family Well-Being Action Plan 2008–2010, under the National Demographic (Population) Political Strategy, addressed a number of issues, including work-life balance.

38. **Ms. Al-Jehani**, drawing the delegation's attention to the Committee's general recommendation No. 27, asked whether a strategy was in place for older women that took

account of the fact that they tended to live longer and ran a greater risk of falling into poverty than men and whether there were adequate homes for such persons if they could not be cared for by their families.

39. **Ms. Pimentel** said that her concern did not lie in the notion of family values per se, but in their qualification as "traditional". Therefore, she wondered whether it was possible to both strengthen traditional family values and encourage the broadening of women's role in society and their participation in public and economic life.

40. **Ms. Jahan** asked whether the bill amending the Law on Citizenship contained safeguards for children born to stateless parents who were not permanent residents, and requested further information on provisions regarding the nationality of Roma children.

41. **Ms. Bareiro-Bobadilla** wholeheartedly commended the State party on its efforts to combat hate crimes and urged it to include information on tangible progress made in the enjoyment of women's rights in its next report.

42. **Ms. Gbedemah** asked what measures were in place to ensure that private sector employers complied with equal pay regulations.

43. **The Chairperson**, speaking in her capacity as Committee member, invited the delegation to comment on the absence of any reference to the Convention or to the Committee's recommendations in the new programme on the prevention of domestic violence and on reports that many cases of domestic violence were never brought before the courts, despite the law mandating that investigations into such cases should be conducted. She asked whether cases of domestic violence would be exempt from the article of the Criminal Code that provided for release from criminal liability upon reconciliation between the offender and the victim and, if so, whether the bill on the protection against domestic violence would ensure that domestic violence would not be covered by that provision.

44. **Ms. Juršėnienė** (Lithuania) said that the study on the situation of women had included older women and that the subsequent report would contain specific recommendations concerning them.

45. **Mr. Milevičius** (Lithuania) said that the family welfare action plan under the National Demographic (Population) Political Strategy, which had been designed in consultation with local authorities and NGOs, included measures regarding the health of older persons. Teaching parenting skills did not conflict with promoting the full participation of women in society.

46. **Mr. Žilinskas** (Lithuania) said that stateless children, including Roma children, could acquire Lithuanian nationality if their parents resided in the country. Proceedings were launched in only half of domestic violence cases and the rest were usually dropped for lack of evidence.

47. **Ms. Juršėnienė** (Lithuania) said that measures had been taken to implement the Committee's recommendations regarding the promotion of gender equality in the private sector, but that no laws had yet been adopted.

48. **Ms. Daugalienė** (Lithuania) said that the bill on partnership defined partnership as the cohabitation of a man and a woman in a family relationship.

49. **Ms. Michailovskytė** (Lithuania) said that no new legislation on domestic violence was currently being drafted; however, a working group had been established to draft a conceptual framework for protection against domestic violence, which might form the basis for a new law or amendments to the Criminal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure. An exception to the provision for release from criminal liability upon reconciliation would be included in either a new law or the existing Codes.

50. **Mr. Klimavičius** (Lithuania) said that the Government was striving to ensure that women's rights were guaranteed not only under the law but in practice as well. It was committed to continuing its cooperation with women's associations and other actors to gradually implement the Committee's recommendations.

51. **The Chairperson** commended the State party for its efforts and encouraged it to take the necessary steps to implement the Committee's forthcoming concluding observations.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.